



# WHAT IS NEEMA INTERNATIONAL?

It all began with Mandy Stein (UT Austin BSW '13 & Harvard M.Ed'19), a girl from Texas who had a dream to make a difference in the lives of children in Tanzania. Mandy first traveled to Tanzania in the summer of 2011 when she was 19 years old, and within one week of being there, she had met the children who would change her life forever. Mandy founded Neema International in 2012, which was her pathway to making a sustainable impact. The organization is registered in USA, Canada and Tanzania and is dedicated to investing in the lives of Tanzania's promising youth through education and sustainable building projects. Neema's reach has grown significantly, from helping just a few children in 2012, to now fully supporting over 200 children and families and providing jobs for over 40 local men and women who are now able to independently support their families. Neema still operates under the leadership of Mandy Stein who lives full time on ground in Tanzania and works alongside the organization's local employees, as well as with the help of Ali Hanson, the organization's co-director who lives in Toronto, Canada.



## Education in Tanzania

Tanzania is one of the fastest growing countries in the world with an average birthrate of over five children per mother. The country's population is growing rapidly with a 3% increase each year, raising its overall population from 46 million in 2012 to 58 million in 2019. Nearly 45% of the country is under the age 15 years old.



The public school system is truly atrocious with student to teacher ratios averaging anywhere from 60 to 80 students to one teacher, and one textbook for every five to ten students. The extremely poor quality of primary education results in only 28% of children going on to secondary school (from age 14-18) and only 3% go on to any higher education, which also includes the equivalent of the western 11th and 12th grade high school years, in addition to college/university studies. For reasons such as adolescent pregnancy, marriage and even menstruation, girls are more likely to drop out of school than their male counterparts. In 2016, 3700 girls dropped out of primary and secondary school due to adolescent pregnancy alone.

## Neema International's Projects

Neema International is based in the remote village of Uru located at the foothills of Mt. Kilimanjaro where Swahili and Kichagga, a tribal dialect, are the only languages fluently spoken, and the vast majority of the estimated 7,000 villagers live on less than a dollar a day, with minimal running water or electricity nor proper healthcare or education. To empower the community and its children, Neema International has not only repaired the main village roads, and provided a clean water well in a centralized location, but we also built a residential children's home, the first ever full service pre-primary & primary school, a remedial education program for adolescents who for one reason or another are no longer enrolled in school and a women empowerment social enterprise sewing project.



Our school, Uru Academy, is the first of its kind, taking the most vulnerable children as early as 10 months old and providing them with everything they need for a successful and productive future. We have created a safe and nurturing environment where children are free to be themselves, grow, and make mistakes without the fear of corporal punishment that is practiced in most homes and schools in Tanzania, stunting the development of so many children across the country. In addition to receiving a free, high-quality education with a student to teacher ratio of 8:1, our 85 students are also provided with proper nutrition, healthcare, clothing, family empowerment/social work services and other basic needs their families cannot afford.

Each Academy student is matched with an outside sponsor through NIESP (Neema International Education Sponsorship Program) who makes a yearly contribution of \$1300 USD that covers that student's "fees" which provides us with enough funding to run the school AND provide each student with the aforementioned wrap-around services. NIESP works to make sure each child is sponsored through to the completion of their primary school years here, and continues to sponsor them at outside private secondary schools and even through the end of their university years!



## Why is Uru academy so important?

Without the presence of Uru Academy, these children would most likely have not been exposed to any learning environment or proper stimulation until the age of six or seven when they are able to enroll in government-funded primary schools, which as research shows is well past the most critical years for child development. Between the total absence of an academic foundation and the trauma and violence to which many of them are exposed,

these children are at risk of falling further into the cycle of poverty that they were born into. Scientists and researchers alike have repeatedly warned that poor child development and significant adverse childhood experiences will not only harm that individual child's future, but can also have an extremely detrimental effect on the future of their society as a whole-- in other words, the cost of inaction could truly be catastrophic and create even greater barriers to prosperity and success for future generations.



## WHY SHOULD YOU INVEST IN NEEMA?

While international-aid organizations such as UNICEF, Save the Children and World Vision are well-known and therefore are trusted as a "safe" investment, money contributed to these organizations doesn't always trickle down to the individuals in **the most need**. Yes, UNICEF has done remarkable work in the health sector making HUGE improvements to maternal and infant mortality and accessibility of vaccines and treatment for tuberculosis, malaria, and HIV/AIDs... but when their CEO makes over \$500,000 a year and lives in the

comfort of the United States, how much can he/she really understand about the problems that individuals deal with on ground in the third-world countries? What about the problems that can't be solved with science and medication?

Large scale international aid targets macro-blanket-solutions that focus on the number of individuals served, instead of on the actual quality or relevance of the services they are delivering. For example, they may have helped Tanzania achieve over 90% primary school enrollment in 2007, but just because students are enrolled, doesn't mean they actually go to school, and even if they go to school, what good does it do if they don't learn anything? How can one really learn anything with unqualified teachers, 80 students in a class and no learning materials or books? Yes, these organizations have put **millions of dollars** into family planning and making birth control more accessible, but how can it be accessed when sex education is hardly taught in the school system, and even worse, if you get pregnant, you are kicked out of school and not allowed to return even once the baby is born.

**Neema ensures that every child that we help is helped ENTIRELY. We want full fixes, not just minor improvements. We want to ensure that the cycle of poverty that each of these children is born into is fully and permanently dismantled and not simply reduced to a lesser severity.**

Unlike other founders and directors, Mandy has never taken a penny of a stipend or salary and left the comfort of her home country to live full time alongside her projects-- that way she can entirely commit herself to improving the lives of those in need. She also speaks Swahili fluently, has taken up the local culture and traditions, and even follows dress code restrictions, which require shoulders and knees to be covered despite the tremendous heat and no air conditioning! Mandy recognizes that Neema is a guest in Tanzania and that the Western way of doing things is not necessarily the correct or better way to do things-- instead, she embraces the idea of a bottom up approach that responds directly to the needs identified by the community-- by the individuals dealing with the problems on a day to day basis. Using this approach to poverty reduction ensures that the money you contribute will be sustainably invested in the projects that directly help those who need it most in ways that have been proven to work on ground in THIS community, and not just what we think will work here because it works for us in the developed world.

To us, this is not a charitable endeavor but an investment that has the potential to bring a thousand-fold return in lives saved for generations to come. Neema has a diversified funding model that utilizes individual donors from both the local and international community, international grants, and has even begun generating its own revenue through our Neema bags social enterprise. While much of the outside communication with donors and fundraising relies on Mandy, Ali and other western volunteers, the day to day operations and even management of the on ground projects is predominantly handled by the local staff, becoming more and more sustainable each day. All donations made to Neema International are tax deductible in the U.S. and Canada. For donation information, please visit [www.neemainternational.org/donate](http://www.neemainternational.org/donate) and click on your respective country for details.